The Builder.

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IN the last number of our journal we expressed a hope that a statement which had been forwarded to us, to the effect that a *Gothic* stained-glass window was about to be put up in St. James's church, Piccadilly, was erroneous; considering that consistency was as necessary in an Italian building as in one of the pointed style. We have since seen the design, and have been led to inquire into the circumstances connected with it. It seems that it has long been desired to fill the window at the east end of St. James's church, which is in six compartments and two stories, with stained glass. Nearly twenty years ago, Mr. Backler adapted to it Raffaelle's "Transfiguration," and had a small glazed model made, whereon he painted the picture. Recently, funds having accrued, the desire was revived, and a committee was appointed to carry it into effect, with Mr. Charles Mayhew, the architect, for honorary secretary. Mr. Fairs, in conjunction with Mr. Backler and Mr. Wilmushurst, submitted the "Transfiguration;" but, after inquiry and consideration, Mr. Willement, Messrs. Ward and Nixon, Mr. Hoadley, Mr. Warrington, Mr. Gibbs, and Mr. Wailes, of Newcastle, were invited to submit designs. The two first being much occupied, declined. The last, namely Mr. Wailes, with a candour which is creditable to him, stated in reply, that having devoted himself and his workmen exclusively to the production of glass adapted to Gothic structures, he hardly considered himself a proper person to execute a window for a church "in the modern style." At the same time, however, he gave the committee his reasons for thinking that stained glass of the Norman or Byzantine period was fitter for a *Roman church* than copies on glass of Italian pictures. In return, the committee said they would be happy to receive any design he might think fit to submit, without restriction as to style.

Accordingly, Mr. Wailes submitted a design in competition with the other parties named, and ultimately it was selected by the committee and ordered to be executed. It is unquestionably an admirable design, and the drawing in which it is set forth is very beautiful; in style, however, it is, as its author knew perfectly well, as different from the church of which it should form a part as Sir Joshua Reynolds' "Virtues" are from New College Chapel, at Oxford, and will be quite as much out of place. It is essentially Gothic, and even if the vesica-pisces, agnus Dei, trefuil, and other forms characteristic of the period be removed, will still remain so, and if put up, will entail opprobrium on those concerned. Inigo Jones, Wren, and others, shewed if not their contempt for pointed architecture, at all events their preference for Italian art, by destroying the unity of our noble cathedrals and churches with Corinthian porticos and Ionic altar-screens,—a proceeding which now forms the only drawback from our admiration of their great genius. If any man were to attempt to do so now, he would be laughed at by the public, and trampled under foot by the Cambridge Camden Society. Why then is consistency to be disregarded in a reverse case? Can we expect to shew *our* preference of one style to the injury of another without the castigation of those who, following after, will see clearer? Gothic doors would hardly be permitted *yet* in a Grecian or Roman church,—the idea would be universally laughed at,—no where approved of. Why are Gothic windows then to be suffered in such a position, or how can those who introduce them expect to escape the ridicule in which they would themselves indulge in the other case?

In the first letter from Mr. Wailes, which was read to the committee, he stated, that whenever he had been called on to fill "Roman windows" with stained glass, he had always inserted Norman glass, on the ground that that was the earliest style of glass painting known, and that as it partook strongly of the Roman character, so much as to be called Romanesque, the use of Norman glass did not entail *half* the anachronism or incongruity that introducing copies of the works of modern painters did, as these latter were removed six or eight centuries further from Roman architecture than the Norman. "I, myself," said Mr. Wailes in his letter (of which we gladly give him the full benefit). "I, myself, see nothing in the pictures of the old masters, as that school is termed, which at all approximates to Roman architecture. The earliest Christian decorations we know, are found in some of the Byzantine churches in Sicily, and these have all the characteristic features of Norman or Romanesque glass; whilst in a copy of an ancient picture, the material of the window (glass) is totally lost sight of, in most cases differing but little from the effect of a transparency on canvas. Glass, from its intractable nature, can only be applied in one particular way, as an architectural mosaic embellishment."

Further, when the artist submitted his design, which he said was totally at variance with the usual mode of ornamenting a Roman window, he urged that it was more in accordance with the Roman style of architecture than the manner adopted by most glass painters. Stained glass, he again maintained, could only be consistently applied in the manner of Roman mosaics.

Now, throughout this argument the artist and those who assented to his views proceed upon an entirely wrong assumption; they forget that St. James's church, like most of our "classic" buildings, is not after the *ancient* models, is not in what we understand, strictly speaking, by the term the "Roman style," but is in reality an *Italian* building, after the models produced by those great men who in the fifteenth century adapted ancient architecture to modern wants and their own views, and induced what was termed the revival:—men who sedulously avoided any thing that was Gothic, and in whose works the *principle* adopted is totally different from the principles exemplified in pointed architecture. The question is not which is the best style for stained glass: if it were, assenting as we do to the opinion expressed by Mr. Wailes, that stained-glass windows ought to be treated more like a mosaic device than a picture, we should have nothing to say. The question, however, is, what character of glass, if any, should be used in St. James's Church, and the obvious, incontrovertible reply is, NOT GOTHIC. We have great respect for the committee appointed (which includes the Bishop of London, and other names of high character), and would not willingly cavil at their decision. Feeling however, strongly on the subject, and knowing full well that if this wrong step be taken it may be the prelude of many others, we strenuously call upon the committee to reconsider their decision dispassionately. The selected design, as we before said, is admirable of its class,—it is simply to the proposed introduction of it in St. James's Church that we loudly object, being satisfied that if persevered in, it will prove a great and serious mistake.

GOTHIC IRONWORK.

CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO ITS INFLUENCE UPON THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STYLE.

THE constraining influence upon style in Gothic architecture, induced by an exclusive desire for reproducing works, which have, or might have been erected at a former time, has been in part indicated by us in previous numbers of this journal.* A reign of taste, which subsists entirely on the produce of former ages, fertile as those ages may have been, bids fair soon to be exhausted, and already there is that resemblance in most of the designs of our new churches, which betokens the probable aspect of the future. It is vain for the architect to trust to no ideas but his own; and without the suggestions, which ancient models afford, he will either lapse into a system of routine, in which the principle of life is wanting; or will run in quest of originality, into eccentricity and *bizarrerie*. But it is equally true, that unless the powers of the artist's own mind are exerted, and unless the advantages peculiar to present times are considered; if to the native ore the reducing flux be not added, the matter will remain an object of interest, but unproductive of those new combinations, to which the fusion in the crucible of art might have led. It is our peculiar humour at this crisis, to content ourselves with a very partial study of ancient models, and a total disregard of all internal resources. We have, therefore, endeavoured to urge the importance of an increased study of the principles of art in former times, and a more active use of the advantages of the present. Amongst these advantages are a greater ability to execute substantial work, through our better knowledge of the properties of materials. Many of the Gothic buildings, though constructed on principles, on which we have not improved, have failed from causes, which modern experience could readily avert. The disuse of uncoursed rubble, a better knowledge of the qualities of materials, the addition of proper drains and gutters, the employment of concrete, and the application of iron to constructive purposes, are some of the advantages which we may be said to be in possession of. Of these, not the least important is the knowledge of the properties of metals.

It must be considered, as one of the greatest merits in Gothic architecture, one which eminently distinguishes it from other styles, that each material, which became the vehicle of design, was invested with the precise character, which its peculiar physical properties and capabilities best admitted of. Whatever the occasional eccentricities, perchance observable in a style of such fertility, it was unquestionably the leading principle of the Gothic architect to give to stone the appearance of stone, to wood the appearance of wood, and of iron that of iron. Though to produce surprise was one object in view, he did not excite it by means, which were not evident; the arrangements, necessary for construction, were not less apparent, than those belonging to decoration, for they were identical. Whatever the space to be decorated, or the constructive object, he yet considered the particular advantages of the material employed, and held, that it was better to seize those advantages than to mimic, in one material, the form and treatment of another. In a screen, or canopy, the arrangement of mullion, and foliation was by no means similar in wood, stone, and metal, and in no case did he desire, by paint, or other mode of deception, to make any thing appear what it was not. Where metal was employed, we find the mullions of less thickness, the crockets of greater projection, and in every respect the

* Vide *ante* pp. 39, 98, 171, 181, 217, 266, 314, &c., &c.

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